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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
MFA FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

BY

JOHN ERIC STEENBERGEN

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

IN

PRINTMAKING

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 2009

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled:

Medium Sized Dry Goods

Submitted by John Eric Steenbergen in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

Date: December 14, 2009



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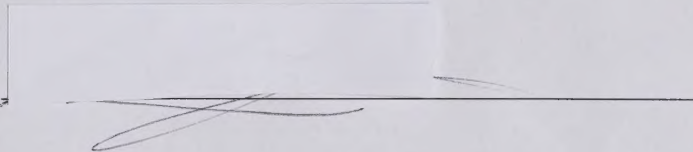
DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS GRANTED: MASTER OF FINE ARTS

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A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'John Eric Steenberg', is written over a horizontal line. Above the signature, there is a rectangular box, likely for a stamp or additional text.

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DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

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I hereby release the following works for incorporation into the University Collections, University of Alberta, as part of the Master of Fine Arts Thesis Collection:

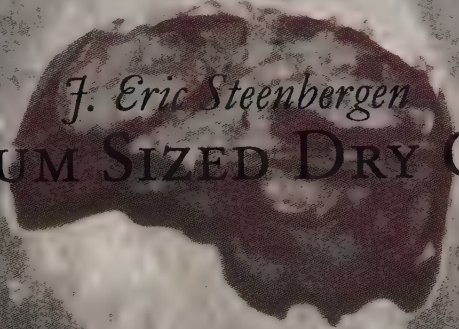
TITLE	DATE	MEDIUM	SIZE
How to End an Experiment #3	2009	Photo-etching, Photo-lithography, Chine-collé	26" x 38"
How to End an Experiment #5	2009	Photo-etching, Photo-lithography, Chine-collé	26" x 38"

MFA Candidate

Name: John Eric Steenbergen

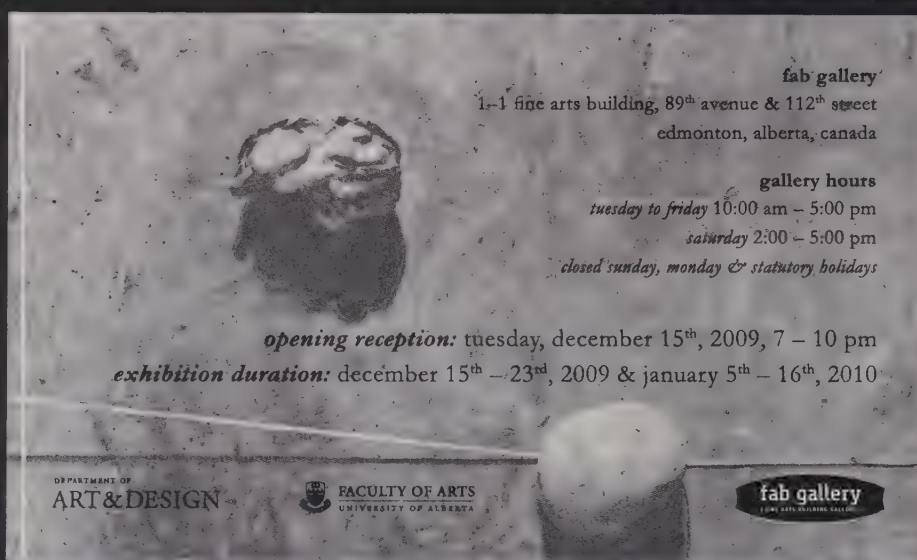
Signature: _____

Date: December 14, 2009



J. Eric Steenbergen

MEDIUM SIZED DRY GOODS



fab gallery

1-1 fine arts building, 89th avenue & 112th street
edmonton, alberta, canada

gallery hours

tuesday to friday 10:00 am – 5:00 pm

saturday 2:00 – 5:00 pm

closed sunday, monday & statutory holidays

opening reception: tuesday, december 15th, 2009, 7 – 10 pm

exhibition duration: december 15th – 23rd, 2009 & january 5th – 16th, 2010

DEPARTMENT OF
ART & DESIGN



FACULTY OF ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

fab gallery
FINE ARTS EXHIBITION GALLERY

"We can look into the sanctum of this temple, the Brain, and therein contemplate the pillars that support it, the arch'd roof that covers and defends it, the fret-work of the ceiling, the double membrane that invest it, the resplendent partition that divides, the four vaulted cells that drain away impurities, the intricate labyrinths of arteries."

- Walter Charleton, *Enquiries into Human Nature in VI Anatomical Praelections* (London, 1680)

"The price of metaphor is eternal vigilance."

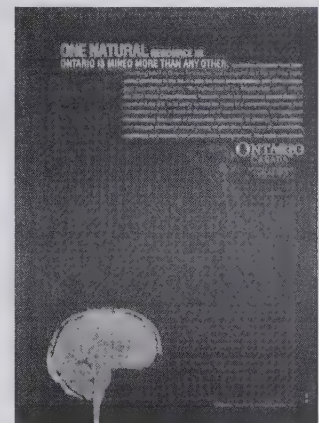
Arturo Rosenblueth & Norbert Wiener

The philosopher J. L. Austin, when describing why the world of sub-atomic particles is so difficult to comprehend, stated that we tend to understand the world in terms of "medium-sized dry goods," the immediate physical stuff of our daily lives: tables, chairs and the like. Austin was responding to the breakdown of metaphor. The discursive tools that had helped to navigate physics in the past were not able to encapsulate this newly emerging world of protons, neutrons and electrons; new metaphors were needed. Metaphor has long been an integral part of scientific exploration, enabling the comprehension and communication of abstract concepts that are foreign to lived experience.

The metaphors through which we describe our bodies and our place in the world reveal a great deal about conceptions of self. The 17th-century physician Walter Charlton's architectural reference to the body, quoted above, reveals the relationship between the body and the soul – the soul being the source of agency. Here, the brain of the recently deceased is a temple to the self in which a soul once dwelt but has now departed. By contrast, a more recent metaphor for the brain is that of a computer: first as hardware, then software and, most recently, a network. The once inhabited temple of the soul has become a computer. What does this change mean for concepts of agency – what is the difference between a soul and a computer?

In June 2008 the *Globe & Mail* ran an article entitled *Mending a Broken Mind*, which stated that sadness is "cells firing five to 30 times per second," and making it [sadness] stop is a matter of 'location, location, location.'" The article examined pioneering treatments for depression involving electrical stimulation of the brain. This article understands agency as something that can break down, a concept that was completely foreign to Walter Charleton. For Charleton, agency came from the soul, which could be tempted and could certainly fall from grace, but could not malfunction; it could not break. The concept that the mind is a breakable, mechanical thing brings it squarely into the realm of medium-sized dry goods, the world of stuff.

The Province of Ontario ran an advertising campaign beginning in 2007, which stated, "One natural resource in Ontario is mined more than any other." Bellow this caption was a MRI image of the brain. The message is clear: Ontario is a leader in the information economy and has well educated people to employ. The implicit message is that intelligence – agency – is a resource to be exploited.



In my work, I create a new system of metaphors: the tree branch, rotted wood, stitching. Using fictional representations of scientific methodology I explore the ritual elements of the experimental method, viewing science as a series of socially constructed steps through which a consensus about the world is built. My images use a systematic presentation. The controlled viewpoint, central composition, and photographic elements reference the specimen and objective data collection. This detached visual style is counter pointed by the visceral nature of the subjects and the material nature of the printing process bringing atmospheric and emotionally charged elements to the work. I seek to create a view of experimental ritual, the formulaic processes that make up the practice of the experimental method.

- The following will be attached to the labels for suites of prints or book works.

Triage: This series is inspired by the poem *Unchopping a Tree* by W.S. Merwin's, which evocatively details the process of righting a tree after chopping it down. It is my hope that the poem's muted instructional tone along with the incongruity of the prescribed methods and goals find voice in these images. The damaged tree, rotted wood and broken branch are surrogate for the human form. They allow me to explore the specimen without the repellent image of flayed flesh; as specimens they are easy to view as objects.

How to End an Experiment: The separation of the detail images on the right hand side from the elaborately constructed images on the left of these diptychs represents the action of classification and definition of specimens. The careful placement on the left reflects the almost ritual methods of the experimental process. This work asks us to consider this process of identification and isolation, which defines the specimen.

Gathering: The concept of universality is commonly used to evaluate the validity of a hypothesis. In his book, *Is Science Neurotic*, Nicholas Maxwell questions the stated aims and methods of experimental science. His thesis proposes that the stated aim of the scientific program is to explore the world objectively with no preconceived values, but this idea is in conflict with the true aim, which does have preconceptions regarding the qualities of a valid hypothesis. *Gathering* is a response to Maxwell's writing. With these works I draw a parallel between the patterns of growth rings in diverging branches and a model of colliding galaxies.

Forgotten Implements: The imagery on the glass of these cases represents, in the last three, common medical instruments used as early as the 15 century. These instruments have had a dramatic impact on the practice of medicine, just as the apparatus used to conduct experiments both enable and influence the collected results. These tools have played a formative role in our history yet they are often left in the shadow of the results they enabled. I have used tree branches in the first box to suggest that we view the development of tools as a natural and therefore inevitable occurrence.

Mentalis Fabrica: The current scientific investigations of our mental processes framed by new technologies have the potential to reduce our cognitive life to a "standing reserve," valued only as a resource to be exploited. Heidegger discusses the concept of standing reserve as in a grove of trees or a forest that becomes cords of lumber awaiting harvest. These trees are defined only by their usability: bound, set out, counted, and seen as lumber - they become that lumber. Any understanding of them must be in this context of use. Shawn

Bailey, in his work *Apothecary*, questions the role of pharmaceuticals in the self-regulation of our bodies. Bailey suggests that the use of pharmaceuticals has established a new norm for a productive individual. Divergence from that norm through sickness is presented, particularly through advertisement but also in our social interactions, as unacceptable and requiring drugs to return us to our normal functional selves. Ultimately, this self-definition through labour places us within the domain of standing reserve, unable to be valued for any other capacity beyond production.

Acknowledgements

To my wife, Rebecca Mador, thank you for your unwavering love and support, without which the last two and half years would have been impossible.

I extend my gratitude to the printmaking faculty and technicians, Sean Caulfield, Liz Ingram, Daniela Schlüter, Marc Signer, and Steve Dixon for their invaluable critical input and assistance in expanding my technical skills.

For teaching me about teaching and for his boundless enthusiasm, I extend my thanks to Roy Mills.

I would like to thank Lianne McTavish for bringing me tremendous opportunities and challenging me academically.

Blair Brennan, thank you for letting me drop by the gallery unexpectedly – everyday.

Thank you to Linda Mills and Simone Gareau who, with their husbands, made Rebecca and I welcome in Edmonton.

Finally, my most heartfelt thanks to my parents, Pat and Dave Steenbergen, for a lifetime of support that has always been complete, unquestioning and far more than I could have hoped for.

These people have made my life richer, my work better, and my thoughts deeper.

Thank you.

J Eric Steenbergen

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www.steenbergen.ca

Solo Shows

Medium Sized Dry Goods, FAB Gallery	Edmonton, AB 2009
Triage, Society of Northern Alberta Print-artists	Edmonton, AB 2009
Re/shape/Re/assemble, C.F.A. Gallery, York University	Toronto, ON 2003
Coffee and Kleenex, Modern Fuel Gallery, KAA	Kingston, ON 2001

Group Shows

Under the impression et al, FAB Gallery	Edmonton, AB 2009
L.A.P.S. 20 th National Exhibition	USA 2009
germinations, recent work by MFA & MDes Students, FAB Gallery	Edmonton, AB 2009
Blurring Boundaries, FAB Gallery	Edmonton, AB 2009
Ewha Womens University	Korea 2009
Cardiff School of Art & Design	United Kingdom 2009
University of Arts London	United Kingdom 2009
University for the Creative Arts	United Kingdom 2009
Print Affair, Society of Northern Alberta Print-artists	Edmonton, AB 2008
edmonton prints, Society of Northern Alberta Print-artists	Edmonton, AB 2008
None of the Above, Society of Northern Alberta Print-artists	Edmonton, AB 2008
re-drawing the line, Art Gallery of Alberta	Edmonton, AB 2008
AP Sale, Open Studio	Toronto, ON 2006
Whodunit?, Ontario College of Art & Design	Toronto, ON 2006
Works Around Paper, Eastern Front Gallery	Toronto, ON 2006
Whodunit?, Ontario College of Art & Design	Toronto, ON 2005
AP Sale, Open Studio	Toronto, ON 2005
Images of Laramie, The Cats Eye	Toronto, ON 2005
Square Foot, AWOL Gallery	Toronto, ON 2004
Print Media Show, C.F.A. Gallery, York University	Toronto, ON 2003
Photography area show, C.F.A. Gallery, York University	Toronto, ON 2002
Photography area show, C.F.A. Gallery, York University	Toronto, ON 2001
Past And Present, Eleanor Winters Gallery, York University	Toronto, ON 2000

Education

Masters in Fine Arts – Printmaking, University of Alberta, Edmonton AB	2009
Bachelors in Fine Arts, Honors York University, Tronoto ON	2003

Residencies

Sir Wilfred Grenfell College SSHRC Research Assistant in Photogravure	2010
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Awards & Scholarships

MFA/MDES Scholarship, University of Alberta (\$30,000)	2007-2009
Alberta Graduate Student Scholarship (\$3,000)	2009
Melba Sadler Graduate Scholarship, University of Alberta (\$3,400)	2008
L.L. Odette Sculpture Award, York University (\$1,000)	2003
Open House Peoples Choice Award in Print Media, York University	2003
Nalini & Tim Stewart Photography Award, York University (\$800)	2002

Catalogs

LAPS 20th National Exhibition.	2009
Blurring Boundaries, Aidan Rowe Curator, University of Alberta	2009
edmonton prints, Nick Dobson & Helen Gerritzen Editors, Society of Northern Alberta Print-artists	2008
re-drawing the line, Helen Gerritzen & Joan Greer Curators, Art Gallery of Alberta	2008

Teaching

Sir Wilfred Grenfell College	
Combined Media II 4 th year	Winter 2010 (Primary Instructor)
University of Alberta	
Introduction to Screenprinting 2 nd year	Fall 2009 (Primary Instructor)
Fundamentals of Art 1 st year	Winter 2009 (Primary Instructor)
Fundamentals of Art 1 st year	Spring 2008 (Primary Instructor)
Fundamentals of Art 1 st year	Winter 2008 (Teaching Assistant)
Introduction to Screen Printing	Winter 2008 (Teaching Assistant)
Advanced Printmaking 4 th year	Fall 2008 (Teaching Assistant)
Typography on Letterpress	Spring 2008 (Technician)
Bookbinding for Drawing	Winter 2009 (Workshop)
Bookbinding for Drawing	Fall 2008 (Workshop)
Society for Northern Alberta Print-artists	
Bookbinding	Winter 2009 (Instructor)
Letterpress	Summer 2009 (Instructor)

Publications & Presentations

Conference Presentation: Steenbergen, J.E. (2008) "Mapping the Populace." Paper presented at Pop Print: Popular Print Cultures - Past and Present, Local and Global.
University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB. August 27-30, 2008.
Publication: Steenbergen, J.E. (2008) "The Community Archives." Ctrl+P issue 11
Photo Credit: Steenbergen, J.E. (2005). Pg. 1. In B. Burns (Author), *Safety Gear for Small Animals/Equipements de securite pour petits animaux*.

Employment

Ontario College of Art & Design	2004-2007
Class Assistant – Digital studios	
Toronto District School Board Archives	2003 - 2004
Fine Art Collection Inventory	

Volunteer

Edmonton Print International, Installation	2008
Society of Northern Alberta Print-artists, Facility Assistant	2007-2009

Open Studio, Installation & Event Assistant	2001-2007
YWCA Beatrice House, Children's Cycling Program	2006-2007
Scouts Canada, Assistant Leader	1998-2003
Victoria College Drama Society, Poster Design	2003

Medium Sized Dry Goods

Image List – J. Eric Steenbergen

1. Steenbergen_01

How to End an Experiment I

25 x 37 Photo-etching, Photo-lithography & Chine colle

2. Steenbergen_02

How to End an Experiment II

25 x 37 Photo-etching, Photo-lithography & Chine colle

3. Steenbergen_03

How to End an Experiment III

25 x 37 Photo-etching, Photo-lithography & Chine colle

4. Steenbergen_04

How to End an Experiment IV

25 x 37 Photo-etching, Photo-lithography & Chine colle

5. Steenbergen_05

How to End an Experiment V

25 x 37 Photo-etching, Photo-lithography & Chine colle

6. Steenbergen_06

How to End an Experiment VI

25 x 37 Photo-etching, Photo-lithography & Chine colle

7. Steenbergen_07

How to End an Experiment VII

25 x 37 Photo-etching, Photo-lithography & Chine colle

8. Steenbergen_08

How to End an Experiment VIII

25 x 37 Photo-etching, Photo-lithography & Chine colle

9. Steenbergen_09

Figure 1: Ripped or Broken Off

18 x 24 Photo-etching, Digital output & Chine colle

10. Steenbergen_10

Figure 2: Arduous Work

18 x 24 Photo-etching, Digital output & Chine colle

11. Steenbergen_11

Figure 3: Further Damage

18 x 24 Photo-etching, Digital output & Chine colle

12. Steenbergen_12

Figure 4: Straightening the Splinters

18 x 24 Photo-etching, Digital output & Chine colle

13. Steenbergen_13

Figure 5: Fitted Back into Place

18 x 24 Photo-etching, Digital output & Chine colle

14. Steenbergen_14

Figure 6: Thoroughfare

18 x 24 Photo-etching, Digital output & Chine colle

15. Steenbergen_15

Figure 7: Cotton Mouth

24 x 36 Digital output & Chine colle

16. Steenbergen_16

Forgotten Implements 1

20 x 10 x 13 Cherry Wood Display Cases with Etched Glass

17. Steenbergen_17

Forgotten Implements 2

20 x 10 x 13 Cherry Wood Display Cases with Etched Glass

18. Steenbergen_18

Forgotten Implements 3

20 x 10 x 13 Cherry Wood Display Cases with Etched Glass

19. Steenbergen_19

Forgotten Implements

20 x 10 x 13 Cherry Wood Display Cases with Etched Glass

20. Steenbergen_20

Mentalis Fabrica

32 x 23 Digital output, Hand Bound Bookwork

21. Steenbergen_21

How to End an Experiment – Book of Specimens

25 x 10 Photo-lithograph, Hand Bound Bookwork

22. Steenbergen_22

Gathering

37 x 9 Digital output, Hand Bound Bookwork

23. Steenbergen_23

Gathering

37 x 9 Digital output, Hand Bound Bookwork

24. Steenbergen_24

Installation View

25. Steenbergen_25

Installation View

26. Steenbergen_26

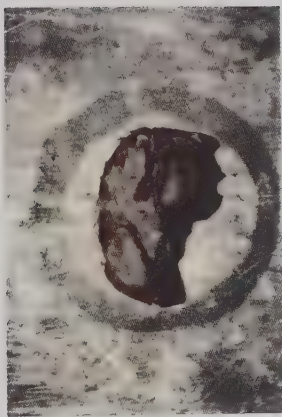
Installation View

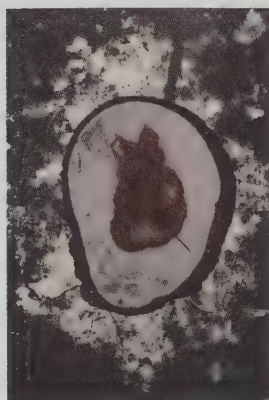
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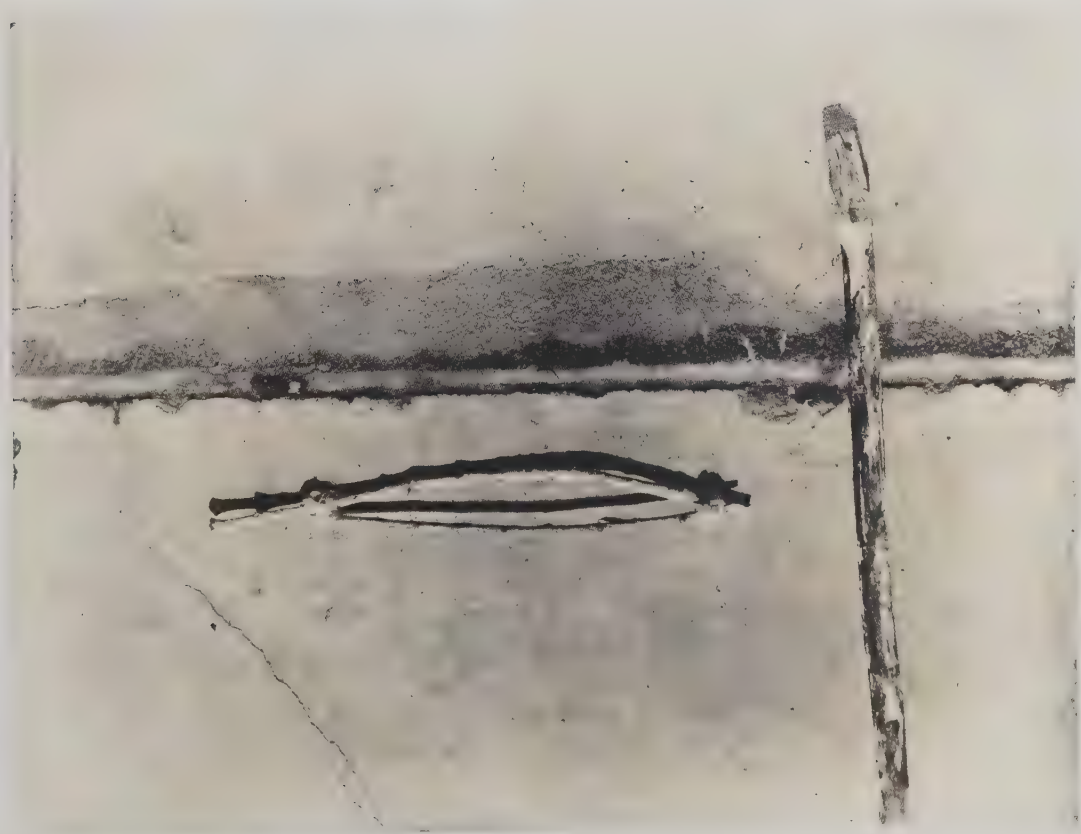
Installation View



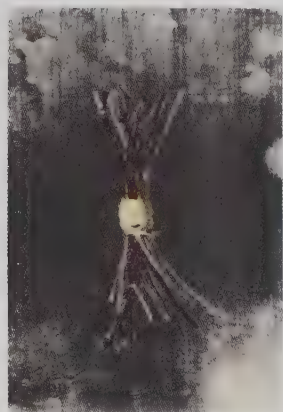


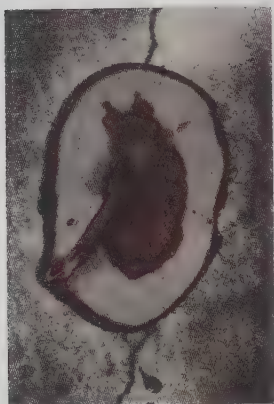


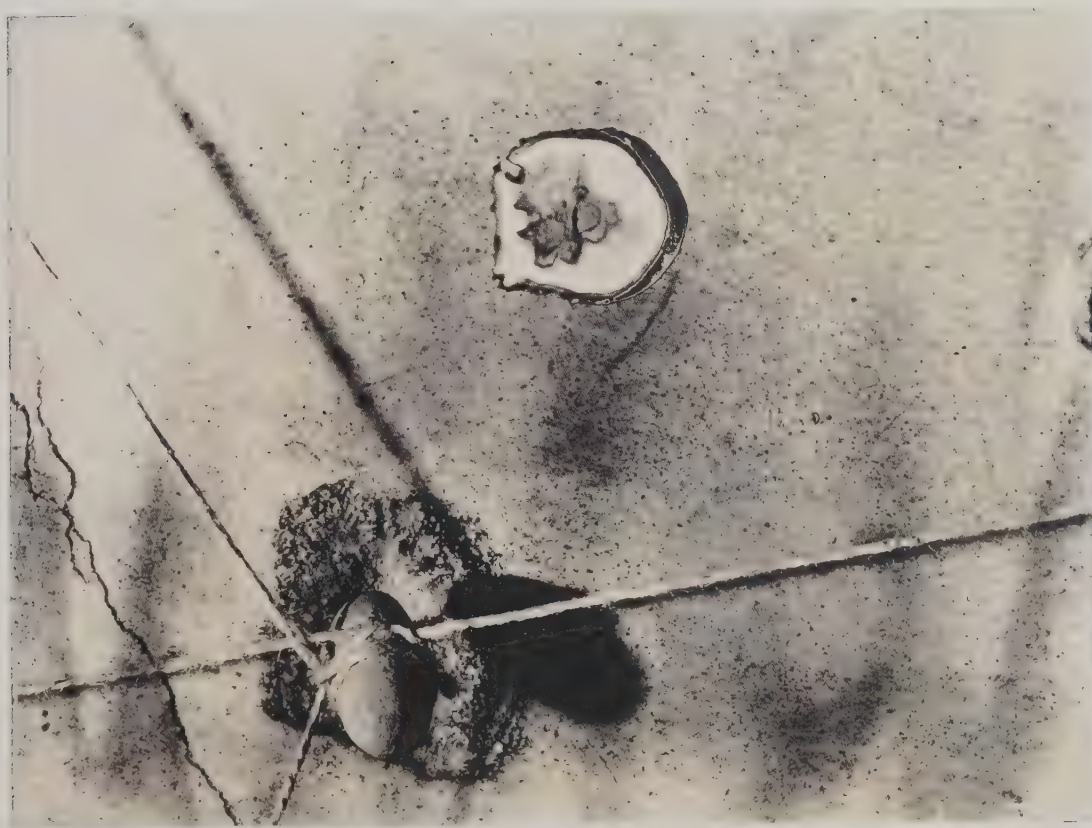


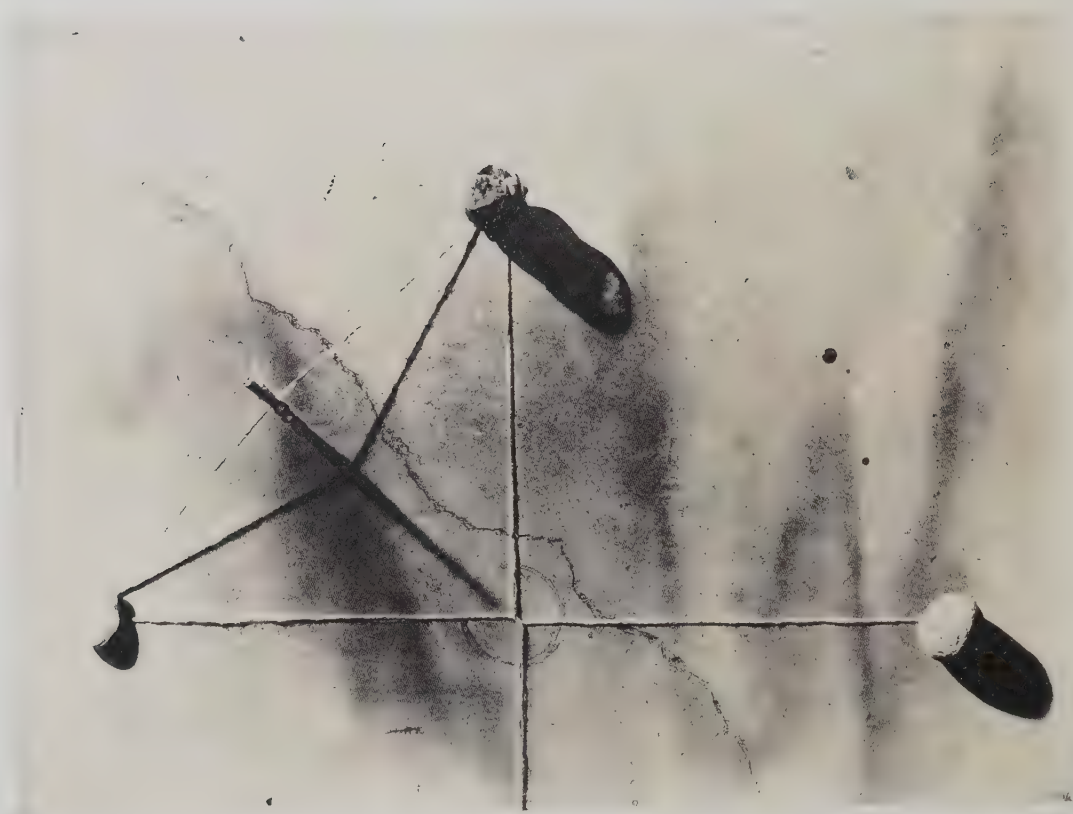










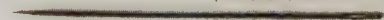


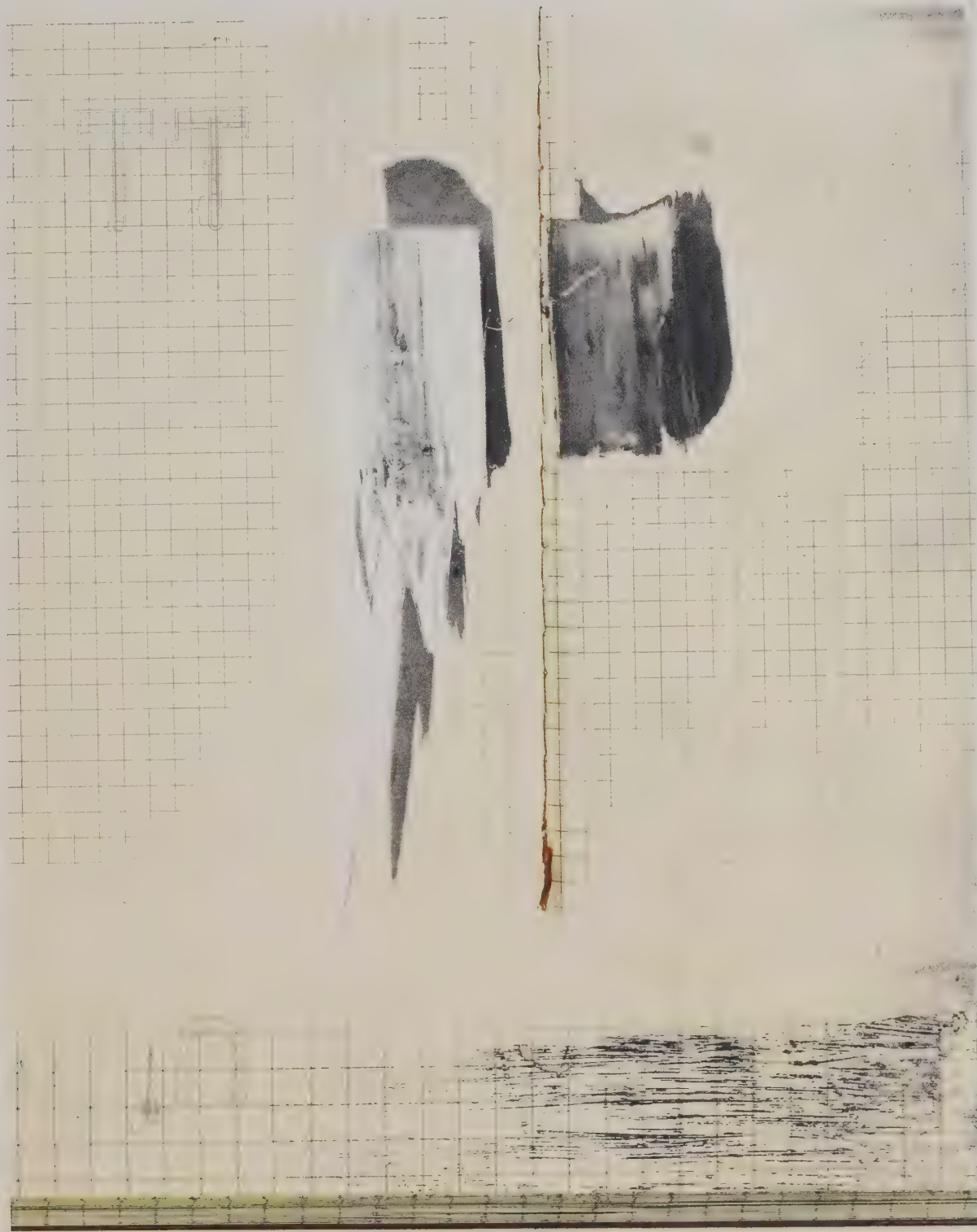


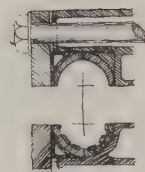
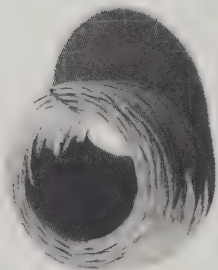




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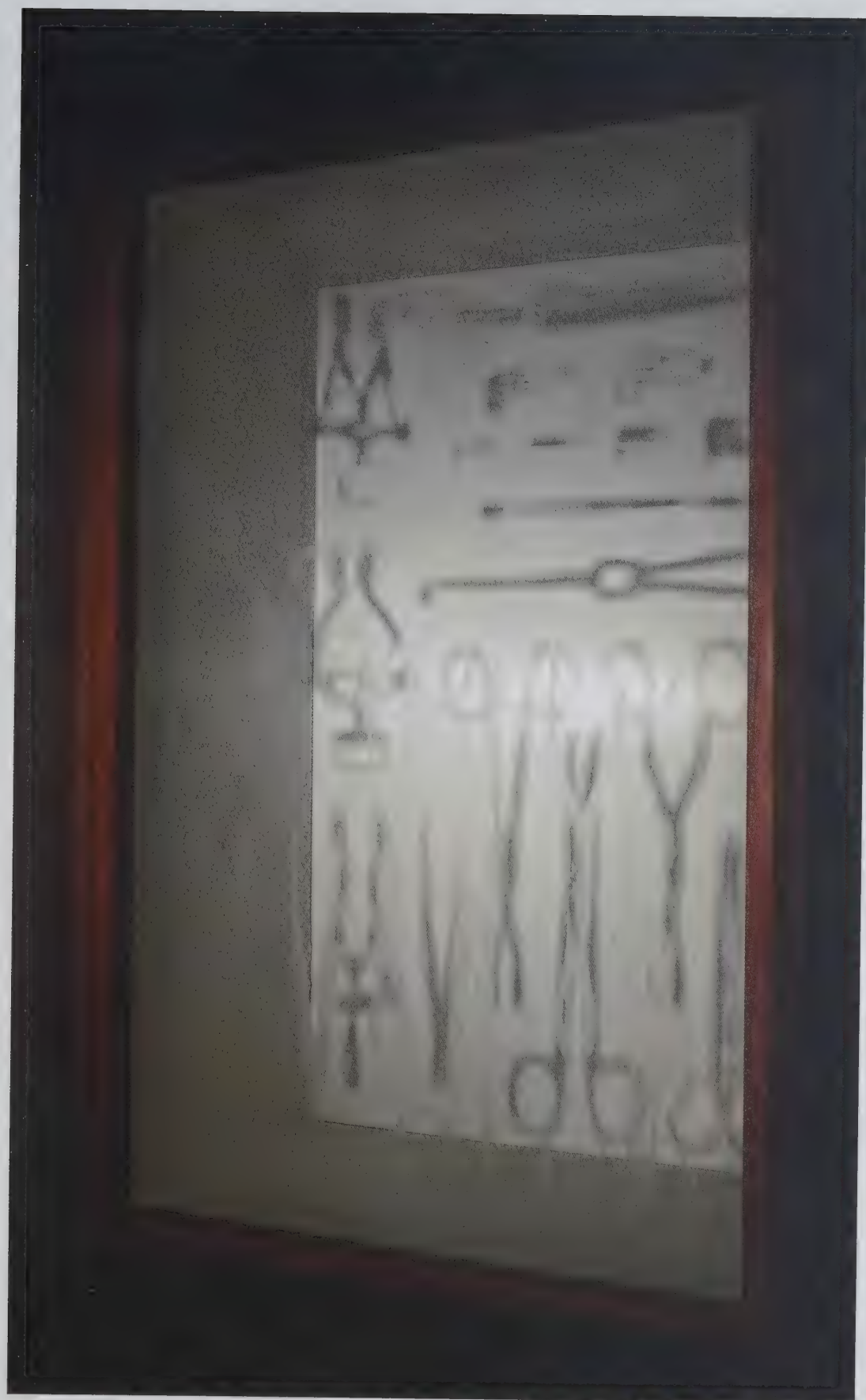


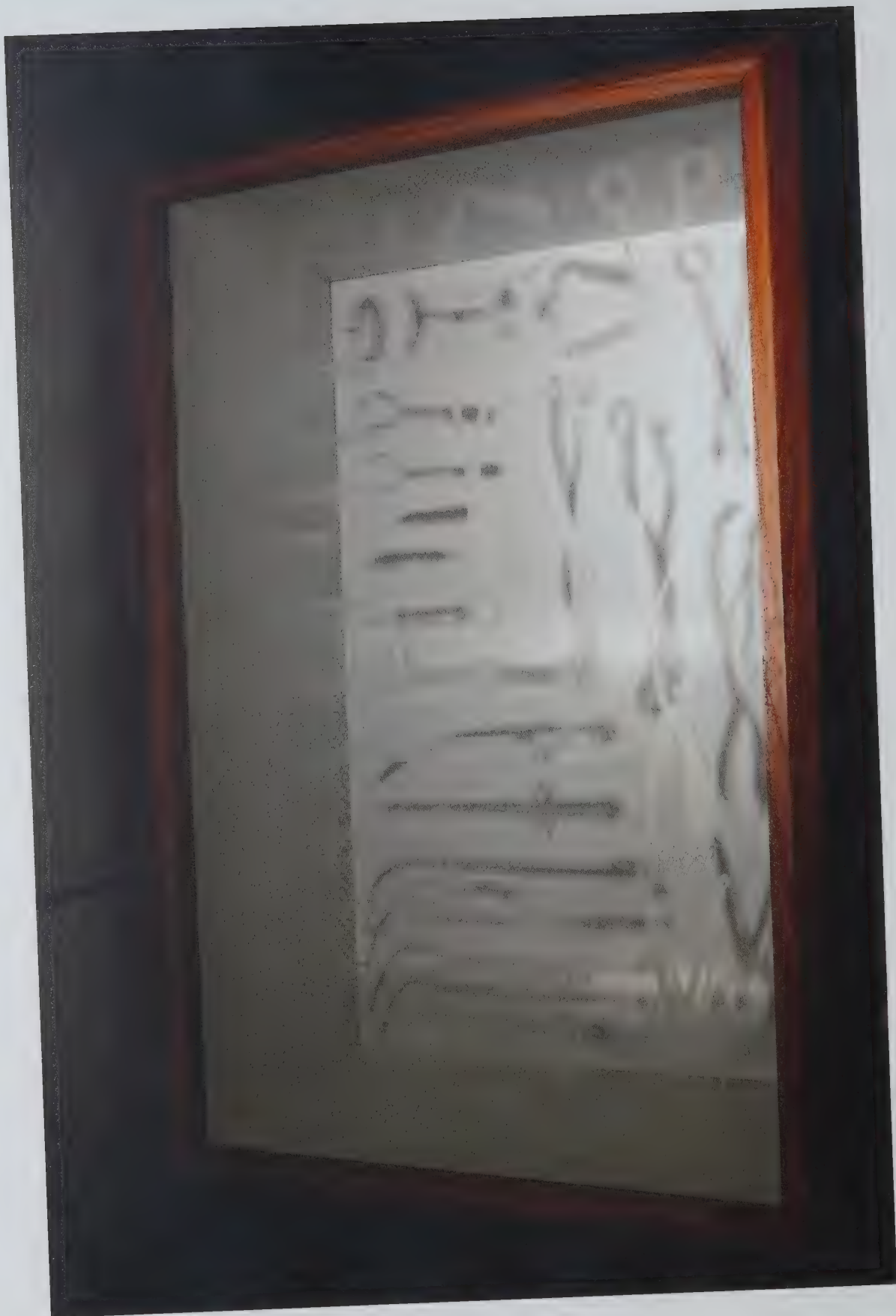






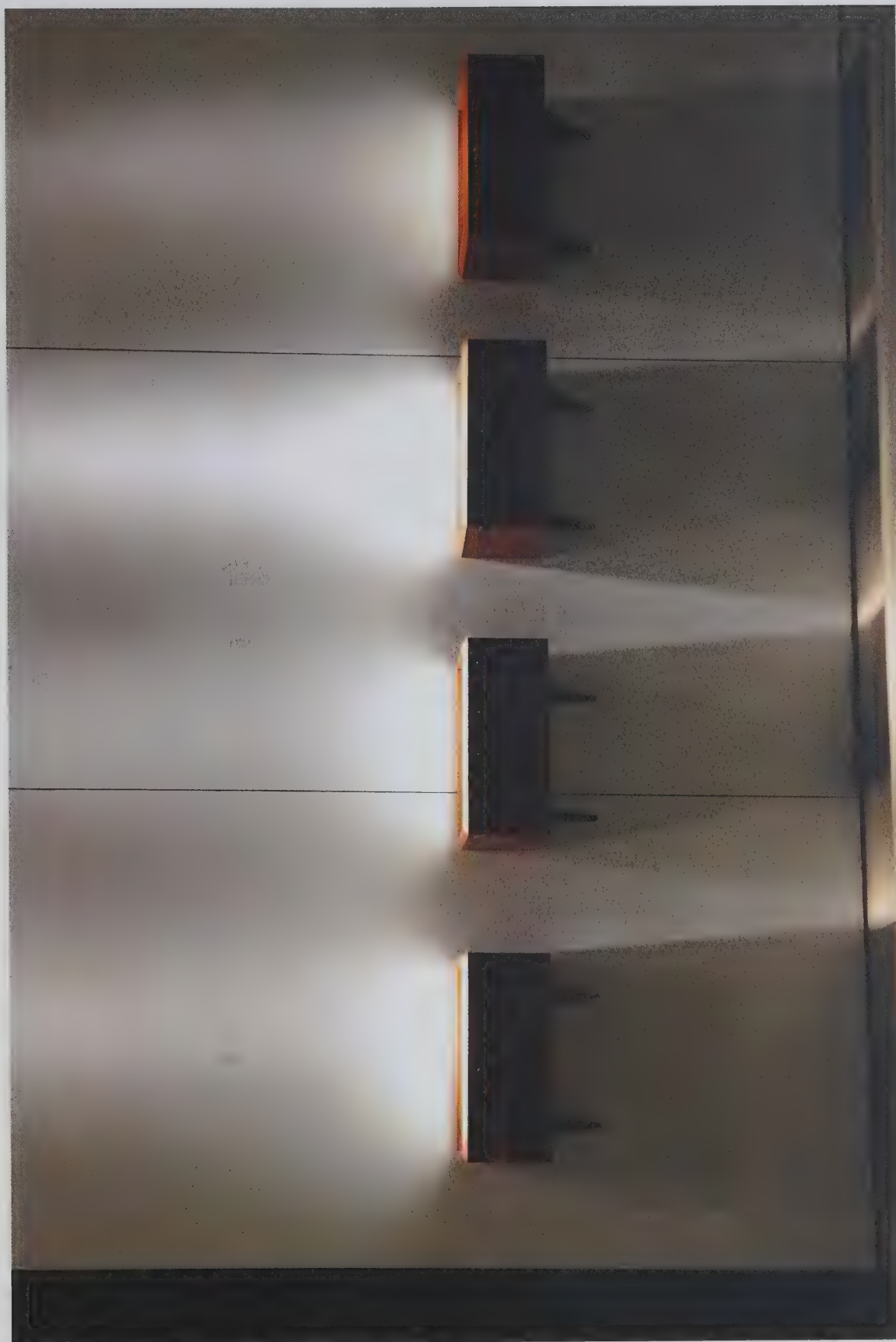




















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